

THAILAND

Counterinsurgency's Proving Ground

MICHAEL T. KLARE

Mr. Klare is completing a book on counterinsurgency planning in the United States, to be published by Alfred A. Knopf, from which this article is taken.

Every imperium has been faced with the task of finding enough troops to maintain hegemony over colonial territories without straining the financial and manpower resources of the mother country. The occupation army of an imperial power is always outnumbered by the indigenous population of a colony; when a liberation movement has secured the active support of sufficient numbers of people in a country to offset the technological advantage of the occupier, the colonial reign is doomed.

Like all imperial powers of the past, the United States has been obliged to employ mercenaries in order to maintain a favorable balance of power in its colonial territories. In fact, a primary objective of our Asian policy is to install client regimes in each country that can be compelled to supply native troops for America's counterinsurgency. U.S. foreign aid programs, import subsidies and military grants are all designed to create privileged strata that are dependent upon American beneficence for their continued prosperity. Since even when in control of the governmental apparatus the ruling junta is dependent upon U.S. aid to finance development projects and meet military payrolls, Washington can insist that such regimes provide troops for combat against insurgents in their own or neighboring countries.

It is in Thailand that the process of creating a mercenary obligation can perhaps be seen most clearly: between 1949 and 1969, the United States provided Thailand with \$2.2 billion in economic and military aid, and invested \$702 million in the construction of "Thai" bases. In return, Washington has compelled the Royal Thai Government to supply combat troops for South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, and to implement the Pentagon's plans for counterinsurgency in Thailand itself. The broad outlines of American involvement in Thailand were brought out last year in the Symington subcommittee hearings on "U.S. Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad." Documents assembled by the Pacific Studies Center of Palo Alto, Calif., and other anti-war groups make it possible to describe in great detail how the United States assumes responsibility for planning Thailand's war against its own people.

In Southeast Asia, the Department of Defense (DOD) found that the use of indigenous troops in counter-insurgent operations creates problems that do not arise in actions against an external enemy. Since such troops are sent against their own countrymen—and often against members of their own village, or even their own family—serious questions of motivation and morale arise. Moreover, the equipment that was initially supplied to our Asian mercenaries—surplus World War II rifles, artillery and vehicles—was designed for use in a jungle or mountain environment. To develop

a research and development (R&D) program for our mercenary armies, similar to the extensive R&D program for the American Army, Defense Secretary McNamara in 1961 established an ongoing program of counterinsurgency research known as Project AGILE.

According to a 1967 memorandum issued by the director of Defense Research and Engineering, AGILE is responsible for "research and development supporting the DOD's operations in remote areas, associated with the problems of actual or potential limited or subversive wars involving allied or friendly nations in such areas." AGILE operates on an annual budget of \$20 million to \$30 million and is administered by the Overseas Defense Research office of the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA). Its task of strengthening the counterinsurgency capabilities of client governments, so as to reduce the need for direct U.S. intervention, is further spelled out in a 1963 ARPA memo:

[AGILE will] conduct R&D programs for systems to provide improvements in allied nations' capability to meet the threat [of insurgency], and DOD capability to assist them in doing so with the particular goal of minimizing U.S. operational involvement. In particular [it will] concentrate on such areas as counter-infiltration, local security, capability of small units in guerrilla warfare, and specialized systems for specific related purposes. . . .

Historically, AGILE has concentrated on surveillance systems and related "electronic battlefield" devices to reduce the manpower requirements for counter-guerrilla operations in remote areas, and on the modifications of basic infantry equipment for use in extreme environmental situations. It has also developed specialized equipment for non-Western troops when the standard G.I. type was inappropriate or inadequate. In the area of behavioral research, AGILE has sponsored research on ethnic minorities thought to be potential sources of mercenaries (e.g., the Montagnards of South Vietnam), and on the development of strategic doctrine for the armies of client governments.

Because of its responsibilities, AGILE is one of the few Defense R&D organizations authorized to establish research programs abroad. At present, the project maintains field offices in Vietnam, Korea, Thailand and Iran. At the same time that the AGILE field office was opened in Saigon, another AGILE office—the Research and Development Field Unit—Thailand (RDFU-T)—was activated in Bangkok. When established in the early 1960s, the two AGILE units were described by *Aviation Week and Space Technology* as follows:

Vietnam is considered the "quick fix" area. ARPA approaches research problems here from a viewpoint of what it can do on an immediate basis, and solely for this country.

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Pentagon Puts Fiscal Squeeze on Universities

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BY GEORGE C. WILSON

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Ithaca, N.Y.—A shiny metal plaque in the entryway of Cornell University's Clark Hall of Science here speaks eloquently of the good old days of Pentagon patronage.

"The Advanced Research Projects Agency of the Department of Defense was essential in the genesis of this building," says the plaque on the seven-story structure, "has provided financial assistance for its development and has strongly supported the research being undertaken in it. This generous assistance is gratefully acknowledged."

The "generous assistance" was the Pentagon's 1965 pledge to pay Cornell \$400,000 a year for 10 years—or half the \$8 million cost of the modern building looking down on Lake Cayuga.

The Advanced Research Projects Agency in return was to get the fruits of basic research in the building's materials science center—a place where expensively equipped graduate students and their professors grope along dark byways of science that are too far from any commercial payoff to impel industry to sponsor the search.

The Pentagon does not know whether the work will pay off in weaponry, either. But the theory in Washington ever since the close of World War II has been that if the Pentagon did not pay for such research, nobody else would.

But the Vietnam war — as President Johnson finds he cannot have all the butter and guns

Graduate schools are especially alarmed, since 75 percent of the research they do is financed by the federal government. Cornell is typical. Some figures from university officials show that:

- 1400 of the 3300 students in graduate school live off federal grants of some kind.

- \$22 million of the total \$36 million Cornell spent in fiscal 1966 in all of its colleges—including arts and sciences, home economics—came from the federal government.

- Almost all of its engineering and space science research money came from Washington —\$2.3 million of the \$2.6 million dollar engineering budget and all but \$17,750 of the \$2.5 million space research program. The Pentagon was the biggest contributor to both.

Cornell and other institutions all along have been using a good portion of this federal money to expand their graduate schools. This means more students to support, more demand for federal dollars.

The fiscal 1968 figure will be only about 2 percent higher than fiscal 1967, say White House officials. Figuring in rising costs and inflation, this will represent a drop in federal support of academic research.

Research leaders at colleges and universities consequently see the next few years as ones of turmoil and uncertainty. Right now they are putting aside expansion programs, cancelling orders for expensive equipment, reducing the number of graduate students they will admit.